

## United States Senate

March 15, 2019

COMMITTEES  
ARMED SERVICES  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR  
AND PENSIONS  
AGING

Inspector General Michael J. Missal  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20571

Inspector General Missal:

I write today out of concern for the residents of the Floyd E. “Tut” Fann State Veterans Home in Huntsville, Alabama. It has come to my attention that veterans residing at this home have allegedly suffered mistreatment by staff who work at the facility—the very people who are charged to ensure they receive the quality care they deserve.

Last week, a local news outlet reported that former employees of this state-owned facility said staff negligence led to the mistreatment of the veterans in their care. Despite passing a federal inspection last August that determined that the facility was “deficiency free,” the whistleblowers alleged that staff were indifferent to issues such as bed sores, improper feeding of the veterans, and a Scabies outbreak.

Though this is a state-owned and managed facility, the federal government has an obligation to inspect facilities and accredit private contractors that are entrusted to care for our veterans. In this case, the company operating the home since 2004 is HMR Veterans Services of South Carolina. Despite the “deficiency free” determination last year, employee reports of negligence go back years and the facility has an official record of violations that date back to 2013.

This fact begs the question: was the 2018 inspection of the facility deeply flawed, or was the evaluation intentionally misrepresentative?

The men and women who have served our country honorably deserve to be treated with the utmost respect. Our responsibility to ensure accountability and transparency must extend to all veterans’ care facilities. That includes those that receive federal dollars through per-diem payments for veterans’ living expenses or

are supported by federal accreditation of private contractors operating retirement homes. Therefore, I am asking that you investigate these allegations and the apparent failures in our inspection process that led to these egregious circumstances in Huntsville. I am committed to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to ensure that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has all resources necessary to fulfill this mission.

Thank you for your prompt response to this request. Please contact Sarah Kate Sullivan in my office at 202-228-3761 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug Jones", with a stylized, cursive script.

Doug Jones

United States Senator